

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00

CIEP-01 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 FPC-01 H-02 INR-07

INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-03 USIA-06

SAM-01 OES-03 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 FRB-03

DLOS-04 OFA-01 /099 W

----- 021479

R 220915Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY OSLO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0107

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 3026

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1 DATE IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE

TAGS: PFOR, NO, UR, SV

SUBJECT: USSR AND SVALBARD

SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTRY'S POLAR ADVISER BUCHER-JOHANNESSEN
BROUGHT ME UP TO DATE ON LATEST SVALBARD DEVELOPMENTS AT JULY 18
LUNCHEON. USSR HAS AGAIN PROBED NORWEGIAN RECEPTIVITY TO SOME
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PACKAGE DEAL IN CONNECTION WITH DIVISION OF BARENTS SEA CONTIN-

ENTAL SHELF. THERE HAS BEEN NO MOVEMENT IN THE DISPUTE OVER NOR-
WEGIAN ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS ON SVALBARD. AND MOSCOW IS
EVIDENTLY UNHAPPY WITH NORWEGIAN ARRANGMENTS FOR CELEBRATING THE
50TH ANNIVERSARY OF NORWAY'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER SVALBARD. END SUMMARY.

1. BUCHER-JOHANNESSEN HAS DISCUSSED THE SOVIET INTERPRETATION
OF THE SVALBARD TREATY AS IT CONCERNS EXPLOITATION OF MINERAL
RIGHTS ON THE CONTINENTAL SHELF ON TWO OCCASIONS THIS YEAR WITH
SOVIET COUNSELOR TITOV, BELIEVED TO BE KGB STATION CHIEF. LAST
WINTER TITOV HEDGED WHEN BUCHER-JOHANNESSEN PRESSED HIM TO SAY
WHETHER THE SOVIET 1970 POSITION AFFIRMING THE RIGHT OF SIGNATORY
POWERS TO EXPLOIT THE SHELF WAS STILL VALID (SEE OSLO'S
0590), BUT TWO MONTHS AGO, TIVO TOLD BUCHER-JOHANNESSEN CONFIDENTLY
THAT 1970 POSITION WAS "ONLY IN FORM OF POUR MEMORIRE" AND NOT
UNCHANGEABLE. MUCH WOULD DEPEND ON THE NORWEGIAN ATTITUDE IN THE
TALKS ON DIVIDING THE CONTINENTAL SHELF. IT WOULD ALSO DEPEND
ON NORWAY'S OIL POLICY OFF NORTH NORWAY: WHETHER NORWAY ALLOCATED
BLOCKS TO FOREIGN COMPANIES OR STATOIL SIMPLY CONTRACTED WITH
AMERICAN OR BRITISH OIL COMPANIES TO DRILL FOR OIL. TITOV ALSO
SPECULATED THAT, AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO AN IMMEDIATE SETTLEMENT,
BOTH SIDES MIGHT SIMPLY AGREE THAT THERE WOULD BE NO ACTIVITY
IN THE DISPUTED AREA I.E. BETWEEN THE MEDIAN AND THE SECTOR LINES.
TITOV HAS APPARENTLY TAKEN OVER FROM ANOTHER KGB OFFICER, NO
LONGER IN OSLO, AS THE INFORMAL SPOKESMAN FOR SOVIET POLICY
ON SVALBARD. A SIMILAR INFORMAL SUGGESTION OF A PACKAGE DEAL WAS
MADE BY THE SOVIET EMBASSY PRIOR TO THE NEGOTIATIONS LAST FALL ON
DIVISION OF THE BARENTS SEA SHELF.

2. THERE CONTINUES TO BE LITTLE SUBSTANTIVE GIVE IN THE SOVIET
ATTITUDE TOWARD NORWEGIAN ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS ON SVALBARD,
ALTHOUGH SOVIETS GENERALLY AVOID CHALLENGING THE NORWEGIANS
DIRECTLY. SOVIET HELICOPTERS STILL FLY INTO THE AIRPORT WITHOUT
BEING PROPERLY LICENSED. SOVIET SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITIONS ON
SVALBARD DO NOT REQUEST PERMISSION TO USE THEIR RADIO TRANSMITTING
EQUIPMENT AS REQUIRED (AT LEAST THEY NOTIFY THE POLAR INSTITUTE
OF THEIR SUMMER WORK PLANS). NORWEGIANS BELIEVE THE SOVIETS ARE
RESPECTING THE REGULATIONS RESTRICTING ENTRY TO THE NEW NATIONAL
PARKS, WHICH THE SOVIETS CONSIDER TOO EXTENSIVE, BUT THEY ARE IN
NO POSITION TO VERIFY COMPLIANCE. IN THE AREA OF PROVISIONAL OIL
DRILLING SAFETY REGULATIONS, SOVIETS HAVE BECOME LESS COOPERATIVE.
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OFFICIALS IN CHARGE OF THE OPERATIONS AT COLES BAY CHOSE TO BE
ABSENT WHEN THE NORWEGIAN INSPECTORS PAID THEIR LAST VISIT, AND
IT WAS EVIDENT THEY HAD NOT MADE THE SMALL CHANGES REQUESTED
DURING THE PREVIOUS INSPECTION TO COMPLY WITH NORWEGIAN REG-
ULATIONS. BUCHER-JOHANNESSEN ADMITTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE REGULATIONS
ARE TOO COMPREHENSIVE (THE SOVIETS CHARGE THEY ARE A FORM OF
ECONOMIC ESPIONAGE) AND HE SAID THEY WERE IN THE PROCESS OF
BEING REVISED FOR SUBMISSION TO THE PARTIES WITH CONCESSIONS ON

SVALBARD. AN INCIDENT LAST YEAR IN LONGYEADBYEN WHERE THE SOVIET VICE CONSUL HAD AN ACCIDENT WITH HIS SNO-SCOOTER ILLUSTRATES THE CAVALIER SOVIET ATTITUDE TOWARD NORWEGIAN REGULATIONS; THOUGH DRUNK AND TOLD NOT TO DRIVE IN LONGYEARBYEN, CONSUL LATER DEFIED THE INJUNCTION WITHOUT ANY ACTION BEING TAKEN AGAINST HIM. FINALLY, THE NORWEGIANS ARE DETERMINED TO ASSERT THEIR RIGHT TO SEND NAVAL VESSELS TO SVALBARD AS THE SOVEREIGN POWER, BUT THEY ARE OBVIOUSLY NERVOUS. A PROPOSAL TO SEND A VESSEL DURING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY CEREMONIES THIS SUMMER WAS OVER-RULED AND THE NEXT SHIP VISIT WILL BE IN LATE AUGUST-EARLY SEPTEMBER.

3. SOVIETS HAVE MADE PLAIN THEY ARE NOT VERY HAPPY WITH THE NORWEGIAN DECISION TO LIMIT THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION TO AMBASSADORS RESIDENT IN OSLO (OSLO'S 2866) IT HAS APPARENTLY UPSET SOVIET PLANS FOR THE CELEBRATION, AND SOVIET AMBASSADOR KIRICHENKO SAID THAT HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER HE WOULD BE ATTENDING. HE ANNOUNCED, HOWEVER, THAT HE AND HIS WIFE WOULD BE LEAVING FOR SVALBARD BY COASTAL STEAMER ON AUGUST 8 AND SPENDING SOME TIME IN BARENTSBURG. SO PRESUMABLY, HE WILL HAPPEN TO BE PRESENT FOR THE CEREMONIES.

4. BOTH THE SOVIETS AND NORWEGIANS ARE IMPRESSED WITH THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF SVALBARD. BEFORE FORMER SOVIET AMBASSADOR ROMAN-OVSKIY DEPARTED, HE TOOK BUCHER-JOHANNESSEN ASIDE AND TOLD HIM NEVER TO FORGET HE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR A MOST KEY PART OF THE WORLD.

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED FOREIGN MINISTER FRYDENLUND IN A PRESS INTERVIEW ON JULY 17 IN ARBEIDERBLADET NOTED THE VISIT BY THREE STORTING COMMITTEES TO SVALBARD THIS SPRING AND THE UPCOMING DEBATE ON THE SVALBARD REPORT, COMMENTING "THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT THAT SVALBARD WILL COME INCREASINGLY INTO THE FOREGROUND OF NORWEGIAN POLICY BOTH BECAUSE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOVIETY ON SVALBARD AND BECAUSE OF THE ISLAND'S INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE." HE JUSTIFIED
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THE STATE'S PURCHASE OF THE SHARES OF SHIPOWNER REKSTEN IN THE STORE NORSK COAL CO., ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE NORWEGIAN STATE SHOULD HAVE "AS GREAT AN INFLUENCE AS POSSIBLE OVER WHAT HAPPENS ON SVALBARD."

BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BUCHER-JOHANNESSEN SAID, IN THIS CONNECTION, IT WAS THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S VIEW THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD FINANCE THE LARGE COAL MINE (AWAITING DEVELOPMENT) AT SVEA. FINANCE MINISTER KLEPPE, HOWEVER, VIEWS SVALBARD NEGATIVELY IN PURELY ECONOMIC TERMS AS A DRAIN ON NORWAY. HE WOULD GLADLY GIVE BACK NORWEGIAN SOVEREIGNTY, BUT HIS VIEW IS A MINORITY ONE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SOVEREIGNTY, LAW OF THE SEA, CONTINENTAL SHELF, FOREIGN RELATIONS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975OSLO03026
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750252-0981
From: OSLO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750733/aaaabeah.tel
Line Count: 166
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06 MAY 2003 by Izenbel0>; APPROVED <07 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: USSR AND SVALBARD SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTRY'S POLAR ADVISER BUCHER-JOHANNESSEN
TAGS: PFOR, NO, UR, SV
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006